

system, the availability of finite rather than infinite resources and manpower, and societal values have all imposed constraints on defense matters.

Second, American defense policy has traditionally been built upon pluralistic military institutions, most noticeably a mixed force of professionals and citizen-soldiers. These pluralistic institutions reflect the diverse attitudes of professional soldiers, citizen-soldiers, and antimilitary and pacifistic citizens about the role of state-sponsored force in the nation's life.

Third, despite the popular belief that the United States has generally been unprepared for war, policy makers have done remarkably well in preserving the nation's security. For most of American history they wisely realized that geographic distance from dangerous adversaries, the European balance of power, and growing material and manpower mobilization potential were powerful assets. When gauging America's strength against potential enemies, policy makers realized that the nation could devote its energies and financial resources to internal development rather than to maintaining a large and expensive peacetime military establishment. However, mobilizing simultaneously with a war's outbreak has extracted high costs in terms of speed and ease with each new mobilization.

Fourth, the nation's firm commitment to civilian control of military policy requires careful attention to civil-military relations. The commitment to civilian control makes military policy a paramount function of the federal government, where the executive branch and Congress vie to shape policy. Civilian control also involves the individual state governments, which, at least until the twentieth century, have exercised considerable military power.

Fifth, the armed forces have become progressively more nationalized and professionalized. Beginning with the American Revolution, the services have increasingly been raised and supported by the federal government and used for purposes defined by the federal government. Although civilians ultimately control military policy, the professionalization of officership has had important consequences for the conduct of military affairs, since career officers in the national service (as opposed to officers appointed only in wartime) have progressively monopolized high command positions.

Finally, industrialization has shaped the way the nation has fought. In particular, the United States has used increasingly sophisticated technology to overcome logistical limitations (primarily in transportation) and to match enemy numbers with firepower. This dependence upon industry and technology in executing military policy has placed enor-

For the Common
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*A Military History
of the United States
of America*

Allan R. Millett
Peter Maslowski



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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	xi
1. <i>A Dangerous New World, 1607–1689</i>	1
2. <i>The Colonial Wars, 1689–1763</i>	21
3. <i>The American Revolution, 1763–1783</i>	47
4. <i>Preserving the New Republic's Independence, 1783–1815</i>	83
5. <i>The Armed Forces and National Expansion, 1815–1860</i>	117
6. <i>The Civil War, 1861–1862</i>	153
7. <i>The Civil War, 1863–1865</i>	194
8. <i>From Postwar Demobilization Toward Great Power Status, 1865–1898</i>	233
9. <i>The Birth of an American Empire, 1898–1902</i>	267
10. <i>Building the Military Forces of a World Power, 1899–1917</i>	299

11. <i>The United States Fights in the "War to End All Wars," 1917-1918</i>	328
12. <i>Military Policy Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939</i>	361
13. <i>The United States and World War II: From the Edge of Defeat to the Edge of Victory, 1939-1943</i>	393
14. <i>The United States and World War II: The Road to Victory, 1943-1945</i>	430
15. <i>Cold War and Hot War: The United States Enters the Age of Nuclear Deterrence and Collective Security, 1945-1953</i>	471
16. <i>Waging Cold War: American Defense Policy for Extended Deterrence and Containment, 1953-1965</i>	508
17. <i>In Dubious Battle: The War for Vietnam and the Erosion of American Military Power, 1961-1975</i>	542
<i>Epilogue</i> <i>The Common Defense in an Age of Uncertainty</i>	578
GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY	589
INDEX	597

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Introduction

Writing military history is an ancient craft, but since classical times military historians have focused almost exclusively on battle and the conduct of war. After World War II, however, American historians began to treat military history in broad political, economic, social, and institutional terms. Although retaining some elements of the “old” military history, this book falls more clearly into the “new” military history of the post-World War II era. Battle connoisseurs will sniff a hint of gunpowder throughout the book, since it discusses the major campaigns in all of America’s wars, but the details of military operations and the problems of combat leadership and tactics are limited to those developments and events that demonstrate the capabilities and limitations of the armed forces as they implement national policy.

The primary purposes of this book are to analyze the development of military policy; to examine the characteristics and behavior of the armed forces in the execution of that policy; and to illuminate the impact of military policy on America’s international relations and domestic development. Thus the book opens another window on American history, building upon the insights of two earlier works, Walter Millis’s *Arms and Men* (1956) and Russell F. Weigley’s *The American Way of War* (1973).

Six major themes place United States military history within the broad context of American history. First, rational military considerations alone have rarely shaped military policies and programs. The political